

**Commandant's Remarks**  
**John Jay College Graduation and Reception**  
**Tuesday, 3 June 2003**  
**Cullum Hall**

Dean Levine, Doctor Benton, faculty, graduates, family and friends, good evening and thank you for inviting me to speak tonight. First of all, I would like to offer my congratulations to the graduates for completing this difficult program. I also received my MPA through the Army Education Center, so I feel your pain.

I would like to talk to you tonight about two themes, near and dear to me: commitment to excellence and selfless service. Since we have all studied organizational effectiveness, everyone here knows that a new leader's first task is to communicate to the organization his vision, goals, and objectives. When I arrived last summer and assumed my duties as the Commandant, one of my first tasks was to develop my command guidance for the staff and faculty. In it, I told them that my vision for the Corps of Cadets was based on the charter for the creation of the modern-day Ranger Battalion, as written by GEN Creighton Abrams in 1974. In it, he stated requirements for tactical and technical proficiency, and conduct and character. The last sentence, though, is what resonates the most with me. He summed up his vision with one simple, yet powerful, sentence that was clearly understood by all: "Wherever it goes, it will be apparent that the Battalion is the best." The Rangers have lived up to that charter

and are the world's preeminent light fighting force, but it has taken sacrifice, courage, perseverance, and teamwork on the part of everyone who was ever in the Rangers. Simply put, it is hard to be good.

You are probably asking what that has to do with you. Well, you graduates here tonight have shown these same qualities in your pursuit of your Master's Degree. Each of you has a full-time job, with significant responsibilities. You often work nights and weekends and even your workday is much more than the typical 8-hour day. Many of you have families, with children; some even have grandchildren. Every minute spent studying, writing a paper, or in the classroom, is time away from your family, and time that cannot be recaptured. It is nearly impossible to strike a satisfactory balance between these competing demands for your time and attention, and for the last few years, your families have borne that burden. So let's now recognize the family members present by asking them to stand. Now, let's give them all a round of well-deserved applause.

I'd like to now talk about your degree for a few minutes. You decided to pursue a fundamentally different degree, with a different focus, from many of your contemporaries. Since this was a choice you made, I believe that your choice of degree says a lot about your character and commitment. You chose a Master of

Public Administration. Having a Master's Degree may certainly lead to a better job for you and, in turn, better pay, but you have decided to spend your time and money learning how to better serve the public, how to better serve the nation. Each of you has already dedicated many years to public service – you are police officers, civil servants, and soldiers – but you still have decided to pursue these studies on your own time in order to better serve your fellow citizens. There is something inherently noble in such a choice, and I respect you for what that says about your character and your commitment to make your community a better place.

It is truly an honor to be here tonight, to recognize your achievements and to celebrate the successful conclusion of your studies. You have demonstrated your commitment to excellence and selfless service through your hard work and determination in completing this demanding program. To you all, I offer my most sincere congratulations. To the faculty present, I thank you for your efforts and for your willingness to accommodate these graduates' unique circumstances without compromising the integrity of your program. I challenge each of you to apply this newly-acquired knowledge and to stay committed to excellence in your future endeavors to serve this great nation. I wish you success and Godspeed in your future endeavors. Go Army!